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## Step to set stage for civil society after Eid

Badruddoza Chowdhury says at Iftar party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday said a move to form a platform of the civil society members would be taken after the Eid to find solutions to the 'problems besetting the nation'.

He however left it to the future to decide if this 'platform' would turn into a political party. He said roundtables with different professionals would be held soon.

"We could discuss with professionals - journalists, educationists, retired bureaucrats, businessmen, industrialists and make in-depth studies of the problems in their own fields and find out solutions," Badruddoza said, ending speculations about his future plans at an Iftar party at the Winter Garden in Sheraton Hotel.

"Following this phase, politicians of course should be consulted and possible political solutions discussed. We need a large number of educated, honest, sincere, broadminded and efficient people of which we have no dearth in our society to take up leadership in

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Ex-president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury is once again the centre of attention for press photographers at an Iftar party he hosted yesterday.

## 1 lakh troops to stay in Iraq until 2006

REUTERS, New York

US Army officials plan to keep 100,000 troops in Iraq through early 2006, reflecting concern that stabilising Iraq could be more difficult than originally planned, The New York Times reported yesterday.

The newspaper reported that a "senior Army officer" warned that maintaining a force of such size beyond early 2006 would cause the Army to "really start to feel the pain" from stress on overstated activity, reserve and National Guard troops.

But the Times said another senior military official cautioned that while the senior Army officer's comments reflected prudent planning, it "has nothing to do with what the security situation on the ground might be in 18 months."

The newspaper said the Pentagon plans to reduce the US military presence in Iraq to 105,000

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## Attacks on Ahmadias

# No move to arrest attackers, instigators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although fundamentalists openly attacked a mosque of the Ahmadiya sect in Nakhhalpara Friday noon and caused communal disturbance, the government has done nothing to arrest the culprits till yesterday.

All it did was to deploy police in the disturbed Nakhhalpara area where over 60 people including 17 cops were injured in the Friday's attacks.

Tejgaon Police Station sources said they did not receive 'any directives to arrest anyone'. No case or investigation has been initiated to book the attackers or the instigators who want the Ahmadias declared non-Muslims.

However, police recorded a case against unidentified persons for attacking cops on the spot.

Meanwhile, militant groups like Hifazate Khatme Nabuwat Andolan, Bangladesh brought out a demonstration in the city led by one Abdul Hannan and demanded that the Ahmadiya be declared non-Muslims. The law-enforcers did not intercept the demonstration that made insulting remarks against the Ahmadias.

The Ahmadias in Nakhhalpara meanwhile remain confined to their area, specifically to their mosque in fear of further attacks. Some 60 policemen were seen guarding the place.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is

learnt to have directed the law-enforcers to ensure that no communal attacks on religious sects occur.

"We are neither involved in politics nor craving for any worldly gains. Then why are we being targeted?" Abdul Awwal, a spokesman of Ahmadiya Muslim Jamaat, said.

"Our people across the country are now under attacks," Moulana Moazzem Hossain of the Ahmadiya mosque at East Nakhhalpara said. "Under the banners of Khatme Nabuwat Co-ordination Committee, Jaise Mustafa, Imam Sanghati Parishad, Aamra Dhakabashi, Nabi Darodi and Darade Rasul, they are now united to unleash attacks to evict us from the

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## Toll-takers kill baker

Another businessman stabbed to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extortionists shot dead a bakery owner at Rampura who refused to pay them toll and assailants stabbed to death a restaurant owner at Hatirpool in the capital in the early hours of yesterday.

A gang of about eight extortionists went to Taslima Bakery at West Rampura and demanded Tk 50,000 from its owner Mobarak Ullah. As he refused to pay, the gang shot him and three employees of the bakery.

Locals rushed them to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where Mobarak was declared dead.

The victim's brother filed a case with Khilgaon Police Station. Restaurant owner Abdur Rahman, 30, was stabbed by unidentified assailants inside the restaurant sometime between 2:00am and 5:00am, sources said.

He was taken to the DMCH

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## Jubo League leader not second time lucky

Gunmen enter hospital to kill Rahmat injuring him hours ago

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified gunmen in a second attempt in less than 24 hours killed a ward unit Jubo League leader at a city hospital yesterday.

Vice-president of Jubo League's ward-54 unit Rahmat Ali was killed at the post-operative unit of Chest Diseases Hospital at Mohakhali.

Four assailants posing as visitors entered the hospital through rear gate at about 5:00pm.

"The killers greeted my husband

with salam. Then they fired from pistol killing him instantly," said Rahmat Ali's wife Nazma Parveen Babi, who was beside him.

On-duty doctor Bazlul Gani Bhuiyan said, "Hearing gunshots, I rushed back to the unit and found patients and visitors running for cover amid smoke."

The killers fled the hospital by a white private car that brought them.

"Four youths came to the hospital just before Iftar in guise of visitors. They were talking to Rahmat

but when everybody was busy with Iftar, they shot him and fled immediately," the officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station quoted a hospital staff as saying.

Earlier Friday afternoon, a gang shot Rahmat in the chest and abdomen after taking him to Balurmath at Rampura.

Relatives said he went there from a hotel at Moghbazar on a phone call from one Robin for business purpose.

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## PM returns today

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia returns home today after performing holy Umrah in Saudi Arabia.

She is expected to arrive at Zia International Airport by a VVIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines at 1:20pm.

The prime minister spent the holy night of Shab-e-Qadr in prayers with millions of devotees at Masjid-ul Haram in Makkah on Friday night.

She prayed for continued peace, progress and prosperity of Bangladesh and for world peace.

Accompanied by members of her family, the prime minister left for Madina on November 13 on an 11-day visit to Saudi Arabia as a royal guest of King Fahad Bin Abdul Aziz.

## Twin blasts at police offices kill 18 in Iraq

REUTERS, Baquba, Iraq

Suicide bombers blew up cars packed with explosives outside two police stations north of Baghdad yesterday, killing at least 18 people in the latest deadly strikes on Iraq's US-backed police force.

In Baghdad, a civilian plane operated by global cargo company DHL made an emergency landing after one of its engines caught fire. Airport officials said the plane may have been hit by a missile and the US army said it was investigating.

In the town of Khan Bani Saad, a car sped toward a police station and detonated as Iraqi police opened fire on it, US soldiers at the scene said. Captain Ryan McCormack said six police and three civilians were

killed. Another suicide bomber targeted the main police headquarters in the nearby town of Baquba, 65 km (40 miles) north of Baghdad.

Lieutenant Colonel William MacDonald, spokesman for the US 4th Infantry Division, said seven policemen and two civilians were killed in Baquba.

The death tolls excluded the car bombers and some witnesses said the Baquba attacker was wearing a police uniform as he drove toward the building.

"I was standing on the balcony of the police station as the car was coming toward the building," said policeman Nazaar Hamzan. "He was wearing a uniform like mine."

DOZENS WOUNDED

Dead and wounded from both attacks were brought to Baquba's hospital, where blood was congealed on the floor of the wards.

"I was trying to resuscitate a four-year-old girl whose legs were blown off but she didn't make it," Dr Sharif Saleh said.

A huge crater was blown into the road outside the Baquba police headquarters. Nearby, a packet of cigarettes lay in a pool of blood, close to a shoe torn apart by the blast. One policeman said he found a severed hand 500 meters (yards) away.

Shards of glass were strewn inside the police station. Part of an air-conditioning unit had been blown across one room, with a

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## All roads lead to home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A festive mood pervades the capital as well as the whole country with the Eid-ul-Fitr drawing nearer.

Dhaka now wears a different look with thousands happily leaving for their village homes to celebrate the Eid with their near and dear ones. This is already reflected in traffic jams not only on the main thoroughfares but also on the alleys.

The markets -- both big and small -- are abuzz with Eid shoppers. New shopping complexes are also drawing huge customers.

The volume of cash withdrawal from banks indicates that people's spending has at least doubled before the Eid, bankers said.

As a three-day public holiday for Eid begins on Tuesday, large number of employees in government, semi-government and private organisations have already taken leave in continuation of the holidays.

Offices and banks will remain closed today on account of Shab-e-Qadr and the last working day will be tomorrow.

However, the launch and bus terminals seemed less chaotic this time due to presence of government vigilance teams and mobile courts to prevent harassment of passengers by anti-social elements.

"The rush of home-bound passengers will reach its peak on Monday," said mobile court magistrate Shahadat Hossain at Saidabad bus terminal. He was there in action against overloading of buses and over-pricing of bus tickets.

At Sadarghat launch terminal, officials said rush of passengers will culminate on Monday.

Meanwhile, with only one more day left for transactions, commercial banks were teeming with people seeking cash with

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Desperate to get a ride home, a man at Dhaka's Sadarghat launch terminal jumps aboard a wooden boat to reach an overloaded launch waiting for more passengers in mid-Buriganga yesterday.

## Opposition seizes Georgia parliament

President flees as protesters demand his resignation

AP, Tbilisi, Georgia

Opposition supporters broke into Georgia's Parliament yesterday and took it over, scuffling with lawmakers and forcing President Eduard Shevardnadze to flee as thousands of protesters outside demanded his resignation.

Opposition leader Mikhail Saakashvili led hundreds of his supporters as they shoved their way into the chamber, overturning desks and chairs and leaping onto the

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## Bangabandhu's sister Ruby passes away

BSS, Dhaka

Syeda Rahman Ruby, sister of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, died of cancer at the BIRDEM Hospital yesterday. She was 68.

Wife of late Capt (rtd) Bazlur Rahman, Ruby left behind two sons, four daughters and a host of relatives.

Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina has expressed her deep shock at the death of Syeda Rahman Ruby.

She prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed her sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

**Eid Mubarak**

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